



## The Ringing of the Bells

### Parshas Kedoshim

#### Following the passing of the Kaliver Rebbe OBM

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Taub, the Rebbe of Kaliv, a Holocaust survivor and a remnant of times passed, served as a living memory and a beacon for the terrible days of the Holocaust.

Since the day he left the gates of the death camps he took upon himself to sanctify G-d's name in the world in memory of the martyrs.

He took the verse of Shema, which was recited by the Holocaust victims upon their deaths, and ensured the every in the world knew how to recite it.

He was very active and endeavors in working to spread Torah and Yiddishkeit all his days.

I had a chance to stay in Tiberius about thirty years ago. The Kaliver Rebbe OBM would stay there occasionally, working to disseminate Torah in the city.

Once, while I was in his presence, we were standing and admiring the beauty of the Kinnereth, the Sea of Galilee, of which our sages have said: "And why was it called Kinnereth? Because its fruits are sweet like the music of a harp (kinnor)".<sup>1</sup> What poetry!

"What are those lights?" the Rebbe pointed across the Kinnereth. I told him it was Kibbutz Ein Gev. "That's a Jewish community?" the Rebbe showed interest. I offered to hire a boat and to cross the lake, so he could see the Kibbutz for himself.

We hired a small boat and crossed the Kinnereth to the other side. We walked among the Kibbutz's empty streets and came upon a child.

The Rebbe asked the boy: "Where is the Shul (synagogue) here?". The boy answered innocently, "We don't have one

here". The Rebbe cried out in response: "How can that be? Jews living in Israel without a Shul? Who's in charge here?"

I told the Rebbe that we should turn to the Kibbutz secretariat for an answer. In those days the secretary was Muki Tzur, an author, a leading figure in the Kibbutz movement and a head of the Kibbutz industry.



The Rebbe focused his gaze on Muki and asked him from depths of his heart: "There is no Shul here? How can that be? I survived the furnaces of Auschwitz, I witnessed Jews who gave their lives for their Creator, and how can it be that a place of residents in Israel lacks a place of prayer?"

I explained to the stunned Muki that the Rebbe has experienced the terrors of the Holocaust and his life's work and aspirations were to spread Judaism throughout the world. "How can I help?" Muki inquired. I immediately suggested that we hold a Melavah Malka for all the Kibbutz members, with song and Torah teachings. Muki agreed and set a date for the next Motzai Shabbos (Saturday night).

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In our weekly parsha we read: "And the Lord spoke to Moshe, saying, speak to the entire congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them, you shall be holy, for I, the Lord, your G-d, am holy."<sup>2</sup>

The verse begin in a future tense, "you shall be holy" – why not speak in the present tense?

Furthermore, why does the verse relate to "the entire congregation?" We know there are various levels of holiness, how can we speak to everyone in the same way?

Rashi explains: "Separate yourselves from sexual immorality and from sin, for wherever one finds a barrier against sexual

<sup>1</sup> Tractate Megilah, 6a.

<sup>2</sup> Vayikra 19: 1-2.

immorality, one finds holiness." One may claim that this has nothing to do with holiness. Therefore, he is told to distance himself from sin, more than he is obligated to. When he does that, he ultimately attains holiness.

One is measured and judged by one's efforts. When a person refrains from evil he comes closer to G-d. The Baal Shem Tov teaches us that when one disconnects from G-d it is as if he is worshipping idols. On the other hand, one who steps away from the profane comes closer to G-d. If one desires to attain a level of holiness – it all depends on his actions.

Our Sages teach us that one who works to attain a bit of holiness, receives much more. Why is a person awarded in accordance with his actions in other Mitzvos, and here his award is greater than his effort?

In the realms of sanctity, when one stays away from the negative he automatically becomes sanctified, and therefore he receives assistance from above. One must make the first step on his own – to refrain from sin.

The previous verse states: "And you shall observe My charge, not to commit any of the abominable practices that were done before you, and you shall not become defiled by them. I am the Lord your G-d,"<sup>3</sup> and subsequently, one is commanded: "you shall be holy" – this teaches us that if one stays away from "abominable practices" he "shall be holy."

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On Motzaei Shabbos we traversed the Kinnereth and the entire community awaited us on the dock. It was an exhilarating sight of Kiddush Hashem (the sanctification of G-d's name) which I will never forget. We turned to the dining hall. At its entrance I extracted a Mezuzah from my Kapotah and the Rebbe said the blessing: "Who has sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us to affix a Mezuzah". Everyone replied with an excited "Amen" as the Rebbe fixed the Mezuzah to the doorpost. I saw them cover their heads with their hands and look upon the scene with a reverence they were not accustomed to.

I stood before them trembling and with immense exhilaration: "Dear Jews, we have the Kaliver Rebbe present with us, a disciple of the Baal Shem Tov.<sup>4</sup> The Baal Shem Tov has taught us a great lesson, to believe in every Jew. There is no such thing as a disconnected Jew! Every Jew is connected to the heavens above; we are all believers and the decedents of believers".

The crowd applauded. Then the Rebbe stood up and sung with much devotion and with closed eyes: "You generously give man wisdom". The audience was very moved. Circles of dancers were formed and the song "Israel, trust in G-d" was sung for many hours.

I realized that this was a proper moment and announced that anyone who is interested in a Mezuzah should add his name to a list, and we would acquire one for him. Nearly thirty people added their name to the list.

A short while after, he established a network of rabbis who brought G-d's word to every point in the country, and entrusted me with heading the movement, which he guided.

It was during those days that he initiated the One Day of Torah program, during which he would travel across the country and convince people to come and learn Torah. He would always incorporate singing in these events.

He did not give up on any location, even the most remote one. He was a symbol of the love of the Jewish People and the memorializing of the Holocaust martyrs. He was one who came to purify himself, and was aided by the Heavens.

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<sup>3</sup> Vayikra 18:30.

<sup>4</sup> Rabbi Yisroel ben Eliezer, was a 18th century Jewish mystical rabbi. He is considered to be the founder of Hasidic Judaism